United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses "grave concern" over Middle East incidents and urges all sides to refrain from violence.

- Secretary-General proposes immediate deployment of United Nations Protection Force to Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) for initial period of twelve months with possibility of renewal of mandate until negotiated settlement is reached.

- United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on framework convention on climate change begins ten-day session in New York.

- United Nations mission goes to Mogadiscio to assess conditions for distribution of humanitarian assistance.

- United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator reports "severe and unprecedented" snowstorms devastating parts of Lebanon.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today in a statement that he viewed with grave concern the events that had taken place in the Middle East in recent days and which had led to an escalation of violence in the area. He said he strongly deplored the loss of innocent lives.

The Secretary-General went on to say that at a time when negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict were under way restraint should be exercised. He urged all sides to refrain from violence, which could only serve to hamper the peace process and to heighten tension in an already volatile region.

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The Secretary-General has proposed that the Security Council authorize the immediate deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping force in Yugoslavia

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-- to be known as the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) -- for an initial period of twelve months, with a possibility for a renewal of the mandate if a negotiated settlement is not reached during that time.

In his report, dated 15 February, the Secretary-General said the Force would succeed only if the Yugoslav parties were committed to engage seriously in the difficult task of negotiating an overall settlement in the Conference on Yugoslavia established by the European Community. This required a working cease-fire and a "clear and unconditional acceptance" of the peace plan by all concerned, "with equally clear assurances of their readiness to cooperate in its implementation". The Secretary-General added that fears that the Force might be withdrawn before the underlying problems have been peacefully resolved "would have a most unsettling effect in the United Nations protected areas".

Mr. Boutros-Ghali further said he had come to the conclusion that the resistance to the plan by Milan Babic, leader of the Serbian communities in the Krajina, should not be allowed to "block" his recommendation. He noted that the opposition to the plan none the less constituted "a potential danger" to its implementation.

The UNPROFOR will have its headquarters in Sarajevo and will be deployed in four sectors in the already existing United Nations protected areas. It will include over 13,000 military, police and civilian personnel placed under the command of the Force Commander, yet to be appointed by the Secretary-General.
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The United Nations Intergovernmental Committee concerned with the drafting of a framework convention on climate change began its ten-day session at Headquarters today.

Among the issues under consideration are new scientific findings revealing that chlorofluorocarbons -- known as CFCs -- may not be making a net contribution to global warming as had previously been thought. This has lead to a renewed emphasis on carbon dioxide build-up as the main contributor to the greenhouse effect.

According to the new data, the world's climate will "warm up" by between 2 and 5 degrees Celcius over the next century if no action is taken to deal with what is being referred to as the "enhanced greenhouse effect". Rising sea levels and changes in rainfall and evaporation patterns are among the results scientists believe would accompany such a temperature shift. An accumulation in the atmosphere of gases produced by human activity since the industrial revolution is cited as the cause.

Among those participating in the negotiations are some of the world's poorest countries, including small island States, countries from Africa's Sahelian region and others with heavily populated river deltas. While they

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have not helped cause global warming and can do little to alleviate it, they risk devastation if their water-tables are contaminated by rising sea levels, their farmlands turn to desert or their rivers flood. They are seeking commitments, as a matter of urgency, to bring global warming under control, and are asking the industrialized countries to assist them in defending themselves against some of its already inevitable consequences.

The framework convention is one of the international instruments expected to be signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during the first two weeks of June.

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A United Nations spokesman told correspondents today that a six-member United Nations humanitarian mission had been sent to Mogadiscio over the weekend to assess the conditions for the distribution of assistance.

While indiscriminate shelling of the civilian population in the Somali capital had stopped, a small airport north of the city was still under bombardement. The mission members would return to Nairobi today to make their report.

In a separate announcement, the spokesman said the Security Council was holding consultations this afternoon to hear a briefing by Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, on Iraqi non-compliance with resolution 707 (1991) and 715 (1991).

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"Severe and unprecedented" snowstorms throughout the first two weeks of February have devastated parts of Lebanon and left many areas totally isolated, according to the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization.

In an appeal issued on Friday, the Agency reported that a number of people had died in the storms and that many were injured. UNDRO had allocated an emergency relief grant of $20,000 for the local purchase of needed materials and was assessing the extent of the damage caused by the storms. Food and medical supplies were needed, as well as snow removal equipment and fuel, UNDRO said.

The Lebanese Government has appealed to the United Nations for international relief.

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